



Press Release

National Labor Relations Board

Office of the Chairman

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NLRB Chairman Wilma Liebman discusses state of American labor law

In remarks delivered to the Washington University Law School in St. Louis today, National Labor Relations Board Chairman Wilma Liebman reflected on the state of U.S. labor law and of the agency she leads, particularly in light of recent unsuccessful efforts to fill longstanding vacancies on the Board and the ongoing debate over proposed labor law reform.

“On the one hand, it is gratifying that, after so many decades of marginalization, labor law and labor policy are once again in the public eye. In that sense, the ongoing debate is welcome, however rancorous,” said Liebman, who was appointed to the Board in 1997 and named Chairman in January 2009. “On the other hand, it is discouraging to see how deep the divisions are and how paralyzed the process has become.”

Liebman noted that labor laws have provided access to economic justice at the workplace, contributed to the expansion of the American middle class and allowed labor and business to reach their own solutions in response to changing economic conditions. “Labor law still matters,” she said, although “the collective bargaining system and the legal institutions that support it are under severe stress.”

“Sober public dialogue is sorely needed if we are to figure out how to allow, indeed encourage, business to be flexible and competitive, yet also ensure workers the protections and promise of the law,” Liebman continued. “In other words, how are we to achieve the necessary delicate balance between market freedom and democratic values? What road we take in addressing these issues will depend on what kind of society we want to be.”

Click [here](#) for the full text of the speech.

The National Labor Relations Board is an independent federal agency vested with the power to safeguard employees' rights to organize and to determine whether to have unions as their bargaining representative. The agency also acts to prevent and remedy unfair labor practices committed by private sector employers and unions.

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